

# INFORMATION BULLETIN

## JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ACT

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TO: SERVICE DELIVERY AREA ADMINISTRATORS  
PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS  
JTPD PROGRAM OPERATORS  
EDD JOB SERVICE OFFICE MANAGERS  
JTPD STAFF

SUBJECT: TITLE III 40 PERCENT WELFARE-TO-WORK PILOT PROJECT

There are currently six Welfare-to-Work (WtW) pilot projects operating within the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Title III 40 percent program in California. This Information Bulletin presents lessons learned after the first year of operation of these projects.

### BACKGROUND

To prepare for the Governor's proposed ready-to-work welfare reform program, in April 1996, the Job Training Partnership Division (JTPD) set aside \$3.5 million of JTPA Title III funds to conduct pilot projects to test specific concepts on how to place welfare clients, who have had some connection with the labor force, into unsubsidized employment. The concept was to develop a partnership with local employers in target industries in which the employers become involved in developing curricula and participating in workshops. These employer-focused workshops were to allow welfare clients to be placed into entry-level employment with minimal intervention.

A request for proposal was issued in April 1996, resulting in receipt of twenty-five proposals totaling \$10.9 million. The pilot projects began August 1, 1996, in Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, Merced, Santa Cruz and Mendocino counties. Employment Development Department (EDD) field offices in those areas were also awarded funds to assist in the projects.

### PROCEDURES

- Workshops were to be designed to be up to four weeks in length. The first two weeks would consist of "World of Work" activities such as assessment and career exploration, job search, resume writing, interviewing skills, etc. The second two weeks would include the industry-specific component. Those Service Delivery Areas (SDA) without an industry-specific component were to use the second two weeks for further job search.

- The industries/occupations targeted included the entertainment and hospitality industries, service industry; clerical, retail sales, and cashier occupations; home health care workers; food preparation workers; and stock clerks.
- The major differences in the WtW workshops and the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) workshops are that the WtW included an intense, up-front assessment; employer involvement; and the industry/occupation focus.

## COORDINATION

- A work group, including representatives from the EDD Job Service Division and JTPD, California Department of Social Services, SDAs, and County Welfare Departments involved in the projects, was formed to identify issues, concerns, and to determine how problems could be resolved. The group met monthly during the first year and are meeting quarterly the second year. Participating employers were also encouraged to attend meetings and share experiences.
- Most participants were referred to the program from the local GAIN staff and are co-enrolled with JTPA. The GAIN program has been paying for supportive services such as child care and transportation while participants are co-enrolled in the program.
- As the program progressed, partners have been constantly reevaluating their methods and making changes to improve the project. Some of the methods learned as a result of these workshops have been incorporated into GAIN workshops.
- Sacramento and Merced counties partnered with their local community colleges to provide up to three units of college credits for participating in the workshops.
- Employers participated in the development of workshop curricula and participated in the workshops. Individual SDAs held employer focus groups to find out what skills employers wanted to see in job applicants. As a result of the focus group, many employers now send representatives of their company to the training sessions to give presentations regarding their specific employment environment. Some employers participate in the workshops because they have an opportunity to prescreen prospective applicants. Many employers provide facility tours to participants.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- The close working relationships developed among all the partners such as JTPA, EDD, GAIN, and employers were the key to making this project successful. Programs such as this enable local agencies to coordinate efforts where they previously were operating independently.
- Federal JTPA Title III eligibility requirements have been a major barrier to recruiting a larger segment of the population on welfare. Only the most job-ready with a work history are targeted due to the federal requirements for this fund source.

- Employers prefer the focus of the training to be on soft skills such as getting to work on time and dressing appropriately. The employers feel that they can do the job-specific training.
- Applicants were not advertised as welfare clients because employers say they just want qualified applicants. The employers believe that retention should be high due to the elaborate screening process for the program. Applicants are more job-ready.
- In Santa Cruz and Orange counties, it was found that Spanish-speaking only classes have a higher placement rate than English-only classes. This shows that some perceived barriers may not be barriers at all.
- Most projects were not industry-specific. Counties found it difficult to develop industry-specific partners because most employers are not large enough to be able to commit to hiring a specific number of WtW clients.
- There appear to be three categories of participants: those who are motivated, those that need a push, and those who are not placeable under this short-term program. Those that need additional training are referred to other longer-term training programs.
- Participation in the workshops by employers was very motivational for participants. Participants were receptive to learning about interviewing, dress, hiring practices, and expected behavior on the job from those who were actually doing the hiring. Participants learned something of what it was really like to work for a specific employer before they applied for work.
- The placement rate of 66 percent is the average for all six projects. The individual placement rates vary from 54 to 77 percent. The lowest placement rates are in Mendocino and Merced counties, which have the highest unemployment rates. The highest placement rates correlate with low unemployment rates.

If you have any questions regarding this Information Bulletin, please call your program manager or Denise Nagy with JTPD at (916) 654-7988.

/S/ BILL BURKE  
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